

SWIMMER PROFILE: PERRY HULL

By
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When I asked my fellow Georgia Masters board members if they could suggest good prospects for a Swimmer Profile feature, Coaches Chair Star Brackin immediately replied, “Perry Hull.” I had never met Perry, but she assured me he would be an “interesting” candidate.

Not knowing what to expect by “interesting,” a few days later, I was on the phone laughing along with Perry who, at 30, was half my age and fun to interview.

Coached by Star Brackin, Perry swims at the Chastain Park Athletic Club on Tuesday and Thursday mornings before working as an animator for Bento Box Animation Studio. Owned by Fox Broadcasting Company, Bento

Box is best known for doing the animation for the Emmy Award-winning animated television sitcom, *Bob’s Burgers*.

Due to Perry’s recent marriage to his wife, Taylor, a packed work schedule, and his other athletic endeavors, Perry is currently unable to squeeze in more time to swim. He lifts weights on Monday and Wednesday nights, and then devotes his weekends to playing dodgeball, including Ultimate Dodgeball at the Skyzone Trampoline Park, in Roswell. Along with a friend, he recently started the Atlanta Dodgeball Club and is recruiting players for his team. Interested? Check them out on Facebook or Instagram and request to join for more information.

Perry has always been active in a variety of sports and activities. As a child living in a small town in Ohio, he joined a club swim team across the state line in Indiana. By the time he reached high school, there were still no other swimmers in his area, so in addition to playing on the football team and running track, he started a swim team. An adult coach was required for Perry to participate in swim meets, however, so his mom got certified and accompanied him to his competitions, including YMCA Nationals during his senior year.

After ten years of competitive swimming, Perry was burned out. Although he was recruited by a few colleges, he opted to play rugby instead.

Perry wasn't finished with the sport for good, though. As he recalled, "Two years after [college], I was living around Cincinnati, and I found Masters. I [thought], 'Oh, so I can do this the rest of my life? Yeah, that sounds like a good idea! So, I started swimming Masters in Cincinnati, and wherever I went, I would swim. I swam a little bit when I was in Los Angeles, and when I moved here, I swam for the [Atlanta] Rainbow Trout briefly until COVID hit. In between COVID, I moved up more north of Atlanta and started swimming at Chastain Park Athletic Club. That's how I met Star (Brackin, the team coach), and it's been a blast ever since... I've always been competitive, and you can't take that out of me; so, especially when I found Masters, I was like, 'Oh, I can still compete. Let's go! I'm going to do that!'"

While living in Cincinnati, Perry competed at a couple of Masters meets; however, when he moved to Atlanta during the pandemic, the pools were shut down. Last year, the Atlanta Adult Summer Swim League started back up, so he joined a team and was back racing again. In the future, he plans on participating in Masters meets.

If you look for his name on a future swim meet psych or heat sheet, don't bother checking under any of the long-distance events, because you won't find Perry's name listed. He's a freestyle and butterfly sprinter. "I am not the typical swimmer body. I am a 5'8" stocky man. I'm all about sprinting and going as fast as I can. I just want to use the muscle and energy that I have, because I don't have the length advantage... I love butterfly; it's such a powerful, fun, and really pretty stroke when you're doing it right."

Although Perry doesn't think he could swim his high school times again, he has set a goal of getting within one second of his high school best time in the 50 freestyle. "If I can get to 23 [seconds] or 22, that would be awesome. We'll see. Last year, my top was like 25. I have a long way to go. In my [100] butterfly, if I can get within 58 or 56, I'll be happy... I don't know if I can do it because of the lack of time I have [to train]."

When I asked Perry if there were particular swimmers he tries to emulate, there were two that immediately came to mind: Michael Phelps and Caeleb Dressel, who he once swam against. "I remember swimming against [Caeleb] in high school, and he was way, way younger than me and *still* beating me!"

Perry did score a big win at one of his first Masters meets, however. "Back in Cincinnati... at the Purdue [University] meet, I was the only one on our team [there], so I was by myself. I only participated in the sprints. I can't remember his name, but everyone was saying, 'That's [the

swimmer who swam for Ohio State last year and was an NCAA champion].’ I was right beside him in the 25-yard freestyle, and I somehow beat him and got 1st!”

His Ohio Masters Swimming experience ended better than it started. As Perry recalled, “When I first joined Masters in the suburb of Cincinnati, it was the first time I had swum in two years. There’s this thing that I think we all know, but I coined the “Liars 50” where like if you haven’t swum in a long time, you jump in, and you just start swimming. Your first 50 feels like nothing has changed like you haven’t skipped a beat, and then a little after that, you’re like, ‘Oh no, you haven’t been in the pool in a while.’ So, I get in the pool, and I’m feeling good. I don’t know any swimmers on the team, and I’m the young one—21 or 22... I can keep up with these old guys, and I have the mindset of an 18-year-old... I was pushing myself really hard, and I was coughing an exhausted cough. That happens when you first get back in. After practice, I was still coughing, and it hurt... I called my mom, and she said to go to urgent care. I go to urgent care and tell them what’s happening. Apparently, according to the doctor, and according to the x-ray, I had worked myself so hard in that one practice that I somehow put a hole in my lung...” The doctor advised Perry to not do any strenuous activity for two weeks, so it could heal up on its own. “My first day back in Masters, I’m just imagining what these people are thinking: ‘This young gun is coming to Masters, he’s new, and he’s working hard, but you can tell he’s kind of overdoing it.’ And, then I don’t show up for two weeks, and they probably thought I quit,” he laughed. Perry made sure after that episode to warn new coaches that he needed to be careful and not push too hard, so he wouldn’t re-open the hole in his lung.

Fortunately, his lungs have been fine since then, and he is thoroughly enjoying swimming with his current club and coach. “I love Star. I’m trying to think of something sarcastic to say, but I love swimming with Star; she’s awesome! It’s funny, because she’s pregnant right now, and I come in to practice in the morning, and she’s laying on the ground. I’m always giving her crap!”

“With Masters swimming, I just love that I fell into a sport that you can do for the rest of your life. I played football, but I can’t play football for the rest of my life. Even if I want to play flag football, after I get to a certain age, I can’t do it. But swimming, that’s the great thing about Masters, because you can do this from 18 to 136!”